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2008/08/05 : Dept.
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100100
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CIA/OC/IM-2423/71

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OCI No. 2423/71

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
21 December 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Laos Situation Report
(as of 1500 EST)

1. There has been a respite in enemy ground activity in the Plaine des Jarres area. No information is available to indicate whether the North Vietnamese have occupied the two fire support bases--Cobra and Stingray--which were abandoned on 20 December. The irregulars from these positions are moving with other forces retreating toward the defenses around Long Tieng. On the night of 20-21 December sappers struck Long Tieng itself, damaging four forward air controller aircraft and wounding a number of Meo civilians.
2. Vang Pao was in Vientiane on 21 December, and Ambassador Godley characterized him as "more demoralized than we have ever seen him." According to Defense Minister Sisouk, Vang Pao was nearly incoherent during an interview with Prime Minister Souvanna. He received permission from Souvanna to evacuate civilians from Long Tieng. The Meo had already begun moving south before he returned. USAID has already set up food and medical relief stations to the south of Long Tieng in an effort to keep the Meo exodus under control.
3. Preparations to defend the area west of the Plaine are continuing. Three 155-mm., six 105-mm., and six 75-mm. howitzers are being moved into Long Tieng, weather permitting, they will be deployed in the defensive line by Christmas. (Total artillery losses on the Plaine amounted to 14 105-mm. and 10 155-mm. howitzers.) In addition to these guns, six 105s and six 155s have arrived in Udorn and will be deployed as soon as possible.
4. The King has delayed the planned move of two battalions from the Luang Prabang area until 26 December

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because of the harvest festival at his farm. A four-battalion irregular group mobile from Savannakhet is scheduled to be deployed near Pha Dong. The situation in south Laos is precarious, however, and new Communist attacks are anticipated at any time. Yesterday the town of Dong Hene on Route 9 about 30 miles east of Savannakhet was rocketed. There are also numerous indications that an enemy force of some three regiments is readying for an attack on Paksong on the Bolovens Plateau. These developments may preclude the release to Long Tieng of the highly capable irregular units from Savannakhet.

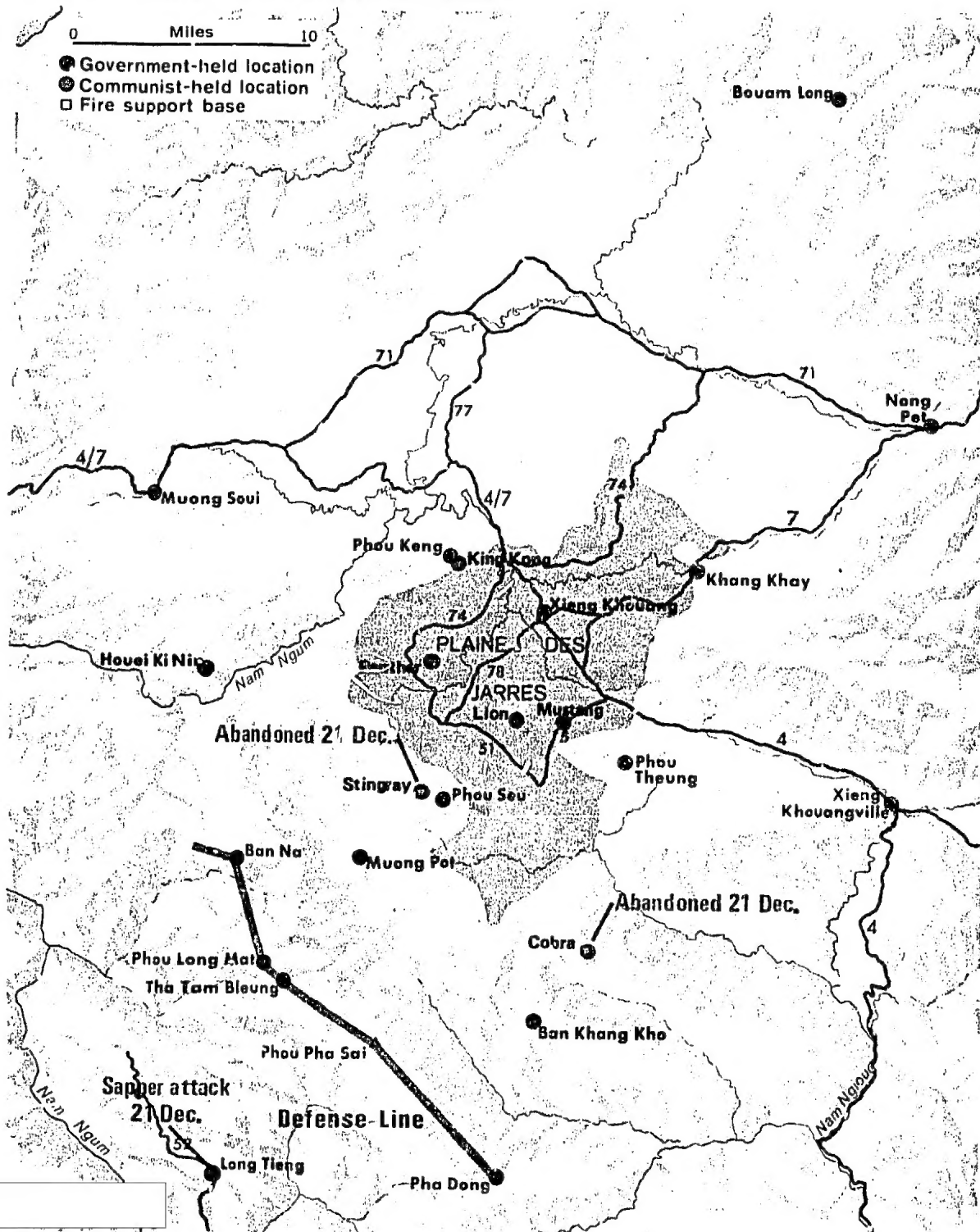
5. Weather over the Plaine is unusually bad, severely limiting Lao Air Force T-28 support. Over 100 US air sorties are scheduled for today, despite the weather.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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